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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 000380

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM PREF UG CG
SUBJECT: UGANDA/DRC: OPERATION RUDIA II UPDATE (APRIL 15,
2009)

REF: A. KAMPALA 311
 1B. KAMPALA IIR 6 913 0093 09
 1C. KAMPALA 341
 1D. KAMPALA IIR 6 913 0164 09

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).).

11. (SBU) Summary: This cable is a periodic update on the regional military operation against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) previously known as Operation Lightning Thunder (OLT). Now under Congolese command, it is known as "Rudia II." This report is not meant to provide an overarching narrative or polished analysis of Rudia II, but rather offers spot information gleaned in Uganda only, from credible U.S. Mission sources here. We recognize the regional scope of the operation and the fact that our sources may be limited in their knowledge and perspectives. End Summary.

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POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT
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12. (C) President Museveni and Chief of Defense Forces Aronda Nyakairima met with Ambassador Browning on April 10. Museveni gave some details of the understanding he had reached in early March with Congolese President Kabil (refs A and B). Uganda, he said, had shifted command over the operation to the DRC and moved Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) operational headquarters to southern Sudan in political deference to DRC President Kabil while the latter dealt with the challenge presented by Speaker of Parliament Vitale Kamerhe. Kabil, however, signed off on an "elastic" definition of what constitutes an intelligence squad and did not want the rest of the Ugandan troops to return to Uganda, but to remain nearby, according to Museveni. As a result, some Ugandan units stayed behind in the guise of intelligence squads while others repositioned nearby in southern Sudan on the border.

13. (C) General Aronda said that 2,000 Ugandan troops remain in DRC, with 800 of these in intelligence squads and others located in Suke, Doruma, and Bitima. The forces can call in attack helicopters at any time. Aronda said their biggest concern is an LRA group numbering 160 fighters near Faradje. (Note: This is the most dangerous LRA group and is headed by Lt. Col. Charles Arop. However, it is located south of the agreed-upon line demarcating the areas of responsibility between the UPDF and Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC). The UPDF is operating north of Faradje and the FARDC is operating south of the town. End Note.) According to Aronda, Uganda wants a "no-objection" statement from the FARDC to cross the demarcation line and go after this high value LRA group. FARDC is not capable of taking on this group and is showing no will to engage Arop, according to Aronda. An expanded mandate that would allow Ugandan troops to go anywhere in pursuit of the LRA would be useful. The Ugandans fear

replicating the "red line" agreement with Sudan during Operation Iron First (2002-2006) which allowed the LRA to escape into areas in southern Sudan in which the UPDF could not operate.

¶4. (C) On civilian protection issues, Museveni stated that the LRA massacres of Congolese civilians happened before Ugandan troops were deployed in those areas. Museveni said that there have been no such incidents in areas where the Ugandans are now deployed.

¶5. (C) Museveni said UN Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Chissano had raised the issue of a potential three-day cease-fire in order for Kony to make it to Rikwangba to call him (Chissano) from a safe area where he will not be come under attack while making the telephone call. Chissano relayed the request to Museveni, who said he would "consider it" and get back to Chissano in two weeks. Museveni told Ambassador Browning that if the four coalition countries agree to a cease-fire and Kony does not show up, military operations would resume. As of April 14, Museveni had not replied to Chissano, according to Nuno Tomas, Chissano's assistant.

¶6. (C) Comment: The cease-fire issue arose during self-appointed LRA Spokesman David Matsanga's visit to Maputo on March 28 (ref C). Matsanga came to Maputo to put Kony on the line directly with Chissano to discuss a cease-fire. After a number of uncomfortable hours sitting face-to-face with Chissano, Matsanga failed to get any member of the LRA on the telephone, according to Tomas. Matsanga returned to his room and then claimed that Kony had changed his mind and

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needed the cease-fire before the LRA leader would call Chissano. Matsanga claimed this would allegedly enable Kony to make a telephone call from a safe location without being attacked. Tomas said it was clear that Matsanga was not in touch with Kony. Nonetheless, Chissano passed the information to Museveni. We doubt the idea of a cease-fire will be pursued given its dubious origin: Matsanga. If a cease-fire is called, however, there is no reason to believe that Kony would surrender since he has had been given multiple opportunities over the past three years. End Comment.

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MILITARY SITUATION
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¶7. (S NF) Uganda's Commander of Land Forces, Lt. Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala, told the Defense Attaché on April 9 that Ugandan troops are consolidating their forces in and around the suspected locations of Kony's main group (ref D). The UPDF has changed tactics from dispersing its forces across northern DRC to concentrating combat power against the LRA leadership groups. The LRA appears to be consolidating its forces into larger groups, according to Wamala. The UPDF's new tactics appear to be paying off. Between April 9 and 13, 14 LRA fighters were killed, including a senior commander and a captain.

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HUMANITARIAN SITUATION
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¶8. (C) We are hearing a number of unconfirmed stories about non-governmental and humanitarian organizations possibly re-supplying the LRA. On March 28, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) stopped thirteen trucks operated by CARITAS Catholic Charities near Yambio. The SPLA believes the trucks contained food and equipment for the LRA. Post is endeavoring to confirm or dismiss the veracity of this information.

¶9. (C) We are also working with a range of UN agencies to

confirm whether or not airdrops are being made in the Faradje area. The UPDF reported an airdrop by a UN-marked plane south of Faradje about ten days ago.

BROWNING